

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

TAMARA VANCE, on behalf of plaintiff and the class defined below,)	
)	
)	Judge Dow
Plaintiff,)	
)	10cv6324
vs.)	
)	
BUREAU OF COLLECTION RECOVERY LLC,)	
)	
Defendant.)	

**MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT OF
PLAINTIFF'S PRELIMINARY MOTION FOR CLASS CERTIFICATION**

Plaintiff Tamara Vance ("Ms. Vance") has requested that this Court enter an order determining that this Telephone Consumer Protection Act ("TCPA") action may proceed as a class action against defendant Bureau of Collection Recovery LLC ("BCR").

This memorandum is submitted in support of that motion.

I. NATURE OF THE CASE

Defendant has been attempting to collect from Plaintiffs an alleged debt incurred for personal, family or household purposes and not for business purposes. On multiple occasions during May 2010, plaintiff received autodialed telephone messages on her cell phone from defendant. The calls were placed using predictive dialers. The basis for Plaintiffs belief that predictive dialers were used to place the phone calls is that when she answered her telephone, there was an automated voice that told her to hold for assistance. There would then be a gap of a few moments, and then a human voice would come on to the line. The predictive dialers place calls without human intervention until a connection is made, in which case the dialers attempt to connect the recipient with a debt collector.

Plaintiff did not authorize the automated placement of calls to her cell phones, nor did Plaintiff ever furnish her cell phone number to Defendant or the putative creditor. Plaintiff did not even obtain the cell phone number at which she received phone calls from Defendant

until after the alleged debt was charged off. Plaintiff alleges that Defendant violated the TCPA by placing automated calls to Plaintiff's cell phone.

II. STANDARD FOR CLASS CERTIFICATION

Class actions are essential to enforce laws protecting consumers. As the court stated in Eshaghi v. Hanley Dawson Cadillac Co., 214 Ill.App.3d 995, 574 N.E.2d 760 (1st Dist. 1991):

In a large and impersonal society, class actions are often the last barricade of consumer protection. . . . To consumerists, the consumer class action is an inviting procedural device to cope with frauds causing small damages to large groups. The slight loss to the individual, when aggregated in the coffers of the wrongdoer, results in gains which are both handsome and tempting. The alternatives to the class action -- private suits or governmental actions -- have been so often found wanting in controlling consumer frauds that not even the ardent critics of class actions seriously contend that they are truly effective. The consumer class action, when brought by those who have no other avenue of legal redress, provides restitution to the injured, and deterrence of the wrongdoer. (574 N.E.2d at 764, 766).

In determining whether a class action will be allowed, the Court should resolve any doubt regarding the propriety of certification "in favor of allowing the class action," so that it will remain an effective vehicle for deterring corporate wrongdoing. Esplin v. Hirschi, 402 F.2d 94, 101 (10th Cir. 1968); accord, In re Folding Cartons Antitrust Litigation, 75 F.R.D. 727 (N.D. Ill. 1977).

Several courts have certified class actions under the TCPA. Sadowski v. Med1 Online, LLC, 07 C 2973, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 41766 (N.D.Ill., May 27, 2008); Hinman v. M & M Rental Ctr., 06 C 1156, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 27835 (N.D.Ill., April 7, 2008); Kavu, Inc. v. Omnipak Corp., 246 F.R.D. 642 (W.D.Wash. 2007); Gortho, Ltd., v. Websolv, 03 CH 15615 (Cir. Ct. Cook Co., March 6, 2008); Travel 100 Group, Inc. v. Empire Cooler Service, Inc., 03 CH 14510, 2004 WL 3105679 (Cook Co. Cir. Ct., Oct. 19, 2004); Rawson v. C.P. Partners LLC, 03 CH 14510 (Cook Co. Cir. Ct., Sept. 30, 2005); Lampkin v. GGH, Inc., 146 P.3d 847 (Okla. Ct. App. 2006); Display South, Inc. v. Express Computer Supply, Inc., 961 So.2d 451, 455 (La. App. 1st Cir. 2007); Display South, Inc. v. Graphics House Sports Promotions, Inc., 992

So. 2d 510 (La. App. 1st Cir. 2008); ESI Ergonomic Solutions, LLC v. United Artists Theatre Circuit, Inc., 203 Ariz. (App.) 94, 50 P.3d 844 (2002); Core Funding Group, LLC v. Young, 792 N.E.2d 547 (Ind.App. 2003); Nicholson v. Hooters of Augusta, Inc., 245 Ga.App. 363, 537 S.E.2d 468 (2000) (private class actions); see State of Texas v. American Blast Fax, Inc., 164 F. Supp. 2d 892 (W.D. Tex. 2001) (state enforcement action).

III. THE PROPOSED CLASS MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION

A. Rule 23(a)(1) -- Numerosity

Fed.R.Civ.P. 23(a)(1) requires that the class be "so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable." "When the class is large, numbers alone are dispositive" Riordan v. Smith Barney, 113 F.R.D. 60, 62 (N.D. Ill. 1986). Where the class numbers at least 40, joinder is generally considered impracticable. Cypress v. Newport News General & Nonsectarian Hosp. Ass'n, 375 F.2d 648, 653 (4th Cir. 1967) (18 sufficient); Swanson v. American Consumer Industries, 415 F.2d 1326, 1333 (7th Cir. 1969) (40 sufficient); Riordan, 113 F.R.D. at 62 (10-29 sufficient); Philadelphia Electric Co. v. Anaconda American Brass Co., 43 F.R.D. 452, 463 (E.D.Pa. 1968) (25 sufficient); Sala v. National R. Pass. Corp., 120 F.R.D. 494, 497 (E.D.Pa. 1988) (40-50 sufficient); Scholes v. Stone, McGuire & Benjamin, 143 F.R.D. 181, 184 (N.D. Ill. 1992) (about 70). It is not necessary that the precise number of class members be known. "A class action may proceed upon estimates as to the size of the proposed class." In re Alcoholic Beverages Litigation, 95 F.R.D. 321 (E.D.N.Y. 1982); Lewis v. Gross, 663 F. Supp. 1164, 1169 (E.D.N.Y. 1986).

Plaintiff alleges that there are more than 40 members of the class. Inexpensive predictive dialer equipment can cost between \$20,000-\$30,000, and it is only economical to buy it if calls are being made to more than 40 individuals. (Exhibit A to motion, "New Telemarketing Device Allows a Type of Prank Call to Consumers," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* (Wisconsin), August 27, 2000.) Plaintiff will obtain the exact number of class members through

discovery and requests a briefing schedule long enough to obtain such information.

B. Rules 23(a)(2) and 23(b)(3) – Predominance of common questions of law or fact

Fed.R.Civ.P. 23(a)(2) requires that there be a common question of law *or* fact. Rule 23(b)(3) requires that the questions of law or fact common to all members of the class predominate over questions pertaining to individual members.

These requirements are normally satisfied when there is an essential common factual link between all class members and the defendants for which the law provides a remedy. Halverson v. Convenient Food Mart, Inc., 69 F.R.D. 331, 334 (N.D.Ill. 1974). Where a question of law involves “standardized conduct of the defendants toward members of the proposed class, a common nucleus of operative facts is typically presented, and the commonality requirement . . . is usually met.” Franklin v. City of Chicago, 102 F.R.D. 944, 949 (N.D.Ill. 1984); accord, Patrykus v. Gomilla, 121 F.R.D. 357, 361 (N.D.Ill. 1988); Carroll v. United Compucred Collections, 1-99-0152 H/G, 2002 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 25032, *43-44 (M.D.Tenn. Nov. 15, 2002), adopted in pertinent part, 2003 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 5996 (M.D. Tenn., Mar. 31, 2003), *aff’d*, 399 F.3d 620 (6th Cir. 2005); Wahl v. Midland Credit Mgmt., 06 C 1708, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 39626, *14-15 (N.D.Ill., May 30, 2007); Smith v. Nike Retail Services, Inc., 234 F.R.D. 648, 659 (N.D.Ill. 2006). The authorities hold that cases dealing with the legality of standardized documents or conduct are generally appropriate for resolution by means of a class action because the document or conduct is the focal point of the analysis. Halverson, *supra*, 69 F.R.D. at 334-336; Haroco v. American Nat’l Bank, 121 F.R.D. 664, 669 (N.D. Ill. 1988) (improper computation of interest); Kleiner v. First Nat’l Bank, 97 F.R.D. 683, 692 (N.D.Ga. 1983) (same); Heastie v. Community Bank, 125 F.R.D. 669, 675 (N.D.Ill. 1989) (execution of home improvement financing documents in sequence that evaded consumers’ rescission rights); Carroll v. United Compucred Collections, 1-99-0152 H/G, 2002 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 25032, *47-48 (M.D.Tenn. Nov. 15, 2002) (collection practices).

In this case, the “common nucleus of operative fact,” Halverson, 69 F.R.D. at

335, is that Defendant called cellular telephone numbers using automated equipment without the authorization of Plaintiff or class members to call those numbers. This conduct gives rise to the predominant common questions of whether Defendant engaged in a pattern of using automated equipment to place calls to cellular telephones, the manner in which Defendant obtained the cell phone numbers, and whether Defendant thereby violated the TCPA.

The only individual issue is the identification of the class members, a matter capable of ministerial determination from defendant's records or court files. Questions readily answerable from defendant's files do not present an obstacle to class certification. Heastie v. Community Bank, 125 F.R.D. 669 (N.D.Ill. 1989) (court found that common issues predominated where individual questions of injury and damages could be determined by "merely comparing the contract between the consumer and the contractor with the contract between the consumer and Community Bank").

In any event, the Seventh Circuit has held that the need for "separate proceedings of some character . . . to determine the entitlements of the individual class members to relief" should "not defeat class treatment of the question whether defendants violated [the law]." Carnegie v. Household Int'l, Inc., 376 F.3d 656, 661 (7th Cir. 2004). "Once that question is answered, if it is answered in favor of the class, a global settlement . . . will be a natural and appropriate sequel. And if there is no settlement, that won't be the end of the world. Rule 23 allows district courts to devise imaginative solutions to problems created by the presence in a class action litigation of individual damages issues. Those solutions include (1) bifurcating liability and damage trials with the same or different juries; (2) appointing a magistrate judge or special master to preside over individual damages proceedings; (3) decertifying the class after the liability trial and providing notice to class member concerning how they may proceed to prove damages; (4) creating subclasses; or (5) altering or amending the class." Id.

C. Rule 23(a)(3) -- Typicality

The rule requires that the claims of the named plaintiff be typical of the claims of

the class:

A plaintiff's claim is typical if it arises from the same event or practice or course of conduct that gives rise to the claims of other class members and his or her claims are based on the same legal theory. The typicality requirement may be satisfied even if there are factual distinctions between the claims of the named plaintiffs and those of other class members. Thus, similarity of legal theory may control even in the face of differences of fact.

De La Fuente v. Stokely-Van Camp, Inc., 713 F.2d 225, 232 (7th Cir. 1983) (citation omitted).

In the instant case, typicality is inherent in the class definition. Each of the class members has been subjected to the same practice as Plaintiff. Plaintiff's claims and the claims of the class members all turn on the legality of Defendant's practice of using automated equipment to place calls to cellular telephones without authorization.

D. Rule 23(a)(4) -- Adequacy of representation

The rule also requires that the named plaintiff provide fair and adequate protection for the interests of the class. That protection involves two factors: (a) the plaintiff's attorney must be qualified, experienced, and generally able to conduct the proposed litigation; and (b) the plaintiff must not have interests antagonistic to those of the class. Rosario v. Livaditis, 963 F.2d 1013, 1018 (7th Cir. 1992); accord, Wetzel v. Liberty Mutual Ins. Co., 508 F.2d 239, 247 (3d Cir. 1975); In re Alcoholic Beverages Litigation, 95 F.R.D. 321.

Plaintiff understands the obligations of a class representative, and has retained experienced counsel, as is indicated by Exhibit B of the accompanying motion, which sets forth counsel's qualifications.

The second relevant consideration under Rule 23(a)(4) is whether the interests of the named plaintiff are coincident with the general interests of the class. Here, Plaintiff and the class members seek money damages as the result of Defendant's unlawful collection practices. Given the identity of claims between Plaintiff and the class members, there is no potential for conflicting interests in this action. There is no antagonism between the interests of the named plaintiff and those of the class.

E. Rule 23(b)(3) -- Class action is superior to other

available methods of resolving this controversy

Efficiency is the primary focus in determining whether a class action is the superior method for resolving the controversy presented. Eovaldi v. First Nat'l Bank, 57 F.R.D. 545 (N.D. Ill. 1972). The Court is required to determine the best available method for resolving the controversy in keeping with judicial integrity, convenience, and economy. Scholes, 143 F.R.D. at 189; Hurwitz v. R.B. Jones Corp., 76 F.R.D. 149 (W.D.Mo. 1977). It is proper for a court, in deciding the "best" available method, to consider the ". . . inability of the poor or uninformed to enforce their rights, and the improbability that large numbers of class members would possess the initiative to litigate individually." Haynes v. Logan Furniture Mart, Inc., 503 F.2d 1161, 1165 (7th Cir. 1974).

In this case there is no better method available for the adjudication of the claims that might be brought by each individual debtor. Individual cases are not economically feasible. The special efficacy of the consumer class action has been noted by the courts and is applicable to this case:

A class action permits a large group of claimants to have their claims adjudicated in a single lawsuit. This is particularly important where, as here, a large number of small and medium sized claimants may be involved. In light of the awesome costs of discovery and trial, many of them would not be able to secure relief if class certification were denied

In re Folding Carton Antitrust Litigation, 75 F.R.D. 727, 732 (N.D. Ill. 1977) (citations omitted).

Another court noted:

Given the relatively small amount recoverable by each potential litigant, it is unlikely that, absent the class action mechanism, any one individual would pursue his claim, or even be able to retain an attorney willing to bring the action. As Professors Wright, Miller and Kane have discussed, in analyzing consumer protection class actions such as the instant one, 'typically the individual claims are for small amounts, which means that the injured parties would not be able to bear the significant litigation expenses involved in suing a large corporation on an individual basis. These financial barriers may be overcome by permitting the suit to be brought by one or more consumers on behalf of others who are similarly situated.' 7B Wright et al., §1778, at 59; see e.g., Phillips Petroleum Co. v. Shutts, 472 U.S. 797, 809 (1985) ('Class actions . . . may permit the plaintiff to pool claims which would be uneconomical to litigate individually.') The public interest in seeing that the rights of consumers are vindicated favors the disposition of the instant

claims in a class action form.

Lake v. First Nationwide Bank, 156 F.R.D. 615, 628-629 (E.D.Pa 1994).

Class certification will provide an efficient and appropriate resolution of the controversy. Zanni, 119 F.R.D. 32.

IV. CONCLUSION

The proposed class meets the requirements of Rules 23(a) and (b)(3). Plaintiff respectfully requests that this Court certify this action as a class action.

Respectfully submitted,

s/ Catherine A. Ceko
Catherine A. Ceko

Daniel A. Edelman
Cathleen M. Combs
James O. Lattuner
Francis R. Greene
EDELMAN, COMBS, LATTURNER
& GOODWIN, L.L.C.
120 S. LaSalle Street, 18th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60603
(312) 739-4200
(312) 419-0379 (FAX)

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Catherine A. Ceko, hereby certify that on October 8, 2010, I caused to be filed the foregoing documents with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF System. I further certify that on this date, or as soon thereafter as service may be effectuated, I will cause to be served a true and accurate copy of the foregoing documents via hand delivery:

Bureau of Collection Recovery LLC
CT Corporation System, Registered Agent
208 S. LaSalle St., Suite 814
Chicago, IL 60604

s/ Catherine A. Ceko
Catherine A. Ceko